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ABSTRACT

Picture books can be used effectively in the classroom in all content areas and at all grade levels. They can supply an almost unending supply of ideas and fit into many content area's teaching strategies because they are short enough to read and use in a class period. When considering the selection of a picture book that is appropriate for use in the classroom and for the subject matter to be taught, it is important to examine what can be learned from the literary work. (Contains a 210-item bibliography of quality literary works which permit the learner to broaden his/her perspectives and interest in reading. (RS)

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# Picture Books Are a Student's Best Friend

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## Picture Books Are a Student's Best Friend

Today's picture books are not being written just for young children. Many of the illustrations in picture books are of such quality one would want to hang them in the classroom or even the living room at home. A good example is Thomas Locker's book The Boy Who Held Back the Sea, the pictures have a museum quality. The authors and illustrators of picture books are writing and illustrating books in such a way that everyone is able to enjoy them.

A picture book is defined as a book in which the illustrations are as important as the text or written story (Harris & Hodges, 1981). When an educator decides to use picture books in the classroom, he/she must consider the value of using the book. According to Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1993) the value of picture books include the following: 1) Hearing good picture books read aloud regularly can help children learn to read and value reading; 2) Sharing picture books with children fosters language development; 3) Picture books can foster children appreciation of art; and 4) Visual clues enable nonreaders and beginning readers to enjoy pictures by themselves.

The types of picture books include Mother Goose books: toy books--board books, pop-up books, flap books, cloth books, and plastic books;

alphabet books, counting books, concept books, wordless-picture books; and easy-to-read books. When using this genre an educator must consider how the book will be received by the students. Jalongo (1988) offers the following suggestions for selecting a picture book:

Step 1 Quickly look over the book to get a feel for the tone and approach.
Step 2 Read just the text, mentally blocking out the art.
Step 3 Read the story carefully while focusing on the harmony of the words and pictures, backtracking and pausing whenever you feel like it.
Step 4 Carefully look at other details such as book design, paper type, endpapers, dedications, and etc.

Some questions to be consider include:

1. What is the illustrator attempting to do?
2. Why is a certain effect used? Is it successful?
3. Are the illustrations or photographs aesthetically pleasing and of good quality?
4. Are the story and pictures well integrated?
5. Is there flow from page to page?
6. Has the artist considered the constraints of format?
7. Has the child been kept in mind? What age child?
8. Could a young child get a sense of the basic concepts of story sequence by looking at the pictures?
9. What about balance, harmony, mood, composition, line, and color?

When considering the selection a picture book that is appropriate for use in the classroom and subject matter to be taught, it is important to examine what can be learned from the literary work. Kiefer (1985) states that students should learn to appreciate excellence in writing and

illustrations represented in the book. Students can also learn to interpret and evaluate literature in its many different forms (Roser and Martinez, 1985). Research by Solsken (1985) states that students learn to communicate more effectively by incorporating the content, vocabulary, and linguistic complexity found in literature. Learners will broaden their perspective in viewing the different cultures and individuals in less stereotypic ways (Sims, 1982). Finally, students need to select books that suit their interests (Hepler & Hickman, 1982).

The bibliography includes picture books that would be appropriate for all age groups and content areas. The books are listed in alphabetical order (Appendix A). The books selected for the bibliography are quality literary works which permit the learner to broaden his/her perspectives and interest in reading.

Picture books can be used effectively in the classroom in all content areas and at all grade levels. They can supply an almost unending supply of ideas and fit into many content areas teaching strategies because they are short enough to read and use in a class period.

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